

Claims

Sub A

1. A document retrieval system with access control for a search engine capable of searching documents distributed over web servers in an electronic network comprising,
one or more web servers having electronic versions of documents available by request,

a search engine having access to access control lists for documents on the web servers, the access control list linking authorized users with all documents permitted for each authorized user, whereby documents found in a search are screened with the list to determine the documents for which a user performing a search has access.

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2. The system of claim 1 further defined by means for forwarding to the user only those document titles compatible with the authorized access of the user.

3. The system of claim 1 further comprising a communications link between a query server, connected to the search engine, and access control lists associated with the web servers.

Sub A2
4. A method of document retrieval in a network environment having web servers where documents are stored and query servers where document searches are launched comprising,

executing a query on a query server having access to a document index of documents available for searching on document servers by a person having a unique identification code without regard to access control limitations, yielding a list of all relevant documents, each document having a unique URL,

reviewing all URLs after the search is executed using an access control list associated with each document server to check whether each URL is compatible with the access level of the identification code of the person executing the query, and

delivering only those documents whose URL is compatible with the access level of the person.

5. The method of claim 4 further defined by providing a data link between the query server and access control lists for associated web servers.

6. The method of claim 5 further defined by storing the access control list separately from the index of documents.

7. The method of claim 5 further defined by storing the access control list separately from the documents.

8. The method of claim 4 further defined by implementing access control with partial URLs indicating the hierarchy of documents to which a person with a unique identification code has access.

9. The method of claim 4 further defined by implementing access control with a common gateway interface script.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein said common gateway interface script returns a message to the query server indicating URLs to which a person with a unique identification code has access.

11. The method of claim 5 wherein a single access control list is provided for all document servers.

12. The method of claim 5 wherein an access control list is provided for each document server.

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13. A method of document retrieval in a network environment having web servers where documents are stored and query servers where document searches are launched comprising,

a plurality of document servers, each having a plurality of documents, each document identified with a unique URL, each document server having an access control list defining user identification and for each user identification listing URLs for which access is permitted or denied,

executing a query on a query server having access to a document index of documents available for searching on the document servers by a person having one of said identification codes, and

producing only those documents whose URL is compatible with the access level of the identification code of the person.

14. The method of claim 13 wherein the URLs are expressed in HTTP protocol.

15. The method of claim 13 wherein each access control list lists URLs for each user identification number with a hierarchical indication of documents for which access is permitted or denied.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein said hierarchical indication of documents is by partial URLs.

17. The method of claim 13 further defined by accessing the access control list by the filesystem of the query server.

18. The method of claim 13 further defined by accessing the access control list by a file transfer protocol.

19. The method of claim 13 further defined by confirming access to the access control list by a script message from a document server.